UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1979
15 September 1995

F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

* Fourth World Conference on Women concludes with adoption of Platform for Action; Secretary-General urges international community to effectively implement agenda for empowerment of women.

* NATO and United Nations suspend air strikes in Bosnia and Herzegovina after Serb leaders undertake to withdraw heavy weapons from Sarajevo exclusion zone.

* Security Council extends UNOMIL mandate until 31 January 1996; welcomes Abuja Agreement, installation of Council of State and cease-fire in Liberia.

* Security Council extends suspension of certain sanctions against Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for six months.

* Interim Accord between Greece and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will encourage stability in region, Security Council says.

* Secretary-General announces composition of five-member Commission of Inquiry for Burundi.

* United Nations increases inter-agency funding target for humanitarian operations in former Yugoslavia to $515 million.

* Secretary-General, in Staff Day address, says United Nations staff are precious asset; stresses importance of ongoing reform of Organization.

* Forty-eighth annual DPI/NGO Conference to be held at Headquarters from 18 to 20 September.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

* * *

The Fourth World Conference on Women concluded today by adopting a Platform for Action calling for the protection and promotion of women's human rights as an integral part of human rights. In a closing statement delivered by Special Representative Ismat Kittani, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali described the Platform for Action as a powerful agenda for the empowerment of women. He stressed that it must be disseminated and implemented globally, regionally and locally.

The Platform focused on concrete measures to address critical areas of concern worldwide, the Secretary-General continued. It called for action to: eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women; remove the obstacles to women's full participation in public life and decision-making; eliminate all forms of violence against women; ensure equal access to education and health services; promote economic autonomy for women; and encourage an equitable sharing of family responsibilities.

The United Nations had a key role to play in the follow-up to the Conference, the Secretary-General said. He pledged that recommendations addressed to him would be implemented swiftly and effectively. He called on all governments to accede to and ratify United Nations human rights instruments and labour conventions -- particularly the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. "Let us work together to implement the Platform for Action adopted here at Beijing," he concluded. "Let us tell the world -- and let us tell it with pride: the empowerment of women is the empowerment of all humanity!"

* * *

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations last night suspended NATO air strikes in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a three-day period after Bosnian Serb leaders committed themselves to withdrawing their heavy weapons from the 20-kilometre exclusion zone around Sarajevo. At the end of the three-day period, NATO and United Nations military commanders will assess the level of Serb compliance with that commitment. Failure to comply, or attacks on the other safe areas, will lead to the resumption of air operations.

The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) Sector Commander in Sarajevo today visited the Lukavica military compound to oversee the assembly of weapons by the Bosnian Serbs. Meanwhile, a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) convoy reached the city via the Kiseljak road without being stopped at any Serb check-points. At the same time, a French aircraft landed at Sarajevo airport. It was the first flight into the Bosnian capital since 9 April.

* * *

Welcoming the Abuja Agreement of 19 August, the installation of the new Council of State and other steps in the Liberian peace process, the Security Council today extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) until 31 January 1996. By unanimously adopting resolution 1014 (1995), the Council also welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to deploy an additional 42 number military observers to monitor the cease-fire and disengagement of forces there.

The Council welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to submit, by the end of October, recommendations on the new concept of UNOMIL operations. He should address measures to enhance the relationship between the Mission and the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), aspects of disarmament and demobilization, and the resources which UNOMIL would require to carry out its tasks effectively. The Council also welcomed his intention to send a mission to consult with Liberian leaders and other parties on the requirements to implement the Abuja Agreement.

The Council urged Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund for Liberia and to provide financial, logistical and other assistance to ECOMOG to enable it to carry out its mandate. It encouraged Member States, particularly African countries, to consider providing troops to the expanded ECOMOG.

* * *

In a second meeting today, the Security Council extended the suspension of certain sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) for six months until 18 March 1996. It took that action, under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, by unanimously adopting resolution 1015 (1995).

Restrictions on air travel, maritime traffic, sporting events and cultural exchanges were originally suspended by resolution 943 (1994) for 100 days, provided that the border between the Federal Republic and Bosnia and Herzegovina were closed. The suspension was subsequently extended by resolutions 970 (1995), 988 (1995) and 1003 (1995).

* * *

The Security Council today welcomed the signing of the Interim Accord by Greece and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In a statement by its President, Francesco Paolo Fulci (Italy), the Council said it looked forward to the establishment of a new relationship between the parties based on international law and peaceful, friendly relations. It believed the Accord would promote stability in the region.

(more)

The Council commended both parties, the Secretary-General, Special Envoy Cyrus Vance, and United States envoy Matthew Nimetz for their efforts in bringing about the Interim Accord, pursuant to resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993). It encouraged them to continue their efforts to resolve the remaining differences between the parties, and urged the parties to implement fully the Accord.

* * *

The Secretary-General has appointed the following as members of the Commission of Inquiry for Burundi: Abde El Ali El Moumni (Morocco), Mehmet Guney (Turkey), Luis Herrera Marcano (Venezuela), Michel Maurice (Canada), and Edilbert Razafindralambo (Madagascar). The Commission, which will be chaired by Mr. Razafindralambo, is expected to leave for Burundi around mid-October.

The Commission's mandate, according to Security Council resolution 1012 (1995), is: (a) to establish the facts relating to the assassination of the President of Burundi in 1993, the massacres and other serious acts of violence which followed; and (b) to recommend measures, after consultation with the Government of Burundi, to prevent any repetition of similar deeds and, in general, to eradicate impunity and promote national reconciliation in Burundi.

* * *

The United Nations inter-agency funding target for assistance to the former Yugoslavia has been increased to $515 million because of a dramatic escalation in humanitarian needs there. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs launched a revised appeal for $470 million in May, but the number of internally displaced persons and refugees in the region has since risen by more than 280,000. More than 3.5 million people in the former Yugoslavia receive United Nations assistance.

In a supplement to the 1995 consolidated inter-agency appeal, United Nations agencies have asked donors for additional funds to cover new and adjusted assistance programmes. Taking into account the adjusted shortfalls in contributions received by the end of August, the agencies need $90 million to fund assistance until the end of the year.

* * *

The Secretary-General today paid tribute to the staff of the United Nations, describing them as a precious asset. In his annual Staff Day address, he said he would work to preserve that asset and, where possible, to enhance its value and effectiveness. As part of the ongoing process of reform of the Organization, staff members would be helped to sharpen and update their skills as necessary.

(more)

Member States wanted a leaner and more efficient Secretariat, which responded promptly to their needs and concentrated on necessary tasks, he continued. That was why a new management culture was needed. The aim was to define goals for the United Nations and to determine the exact function of each staff member in the achievement of them. The process of reform was not assisted by the current financial crisis, and sacrifices would be required from all.

"We are privileged to be taking part in the building of a better world," the Secretary-General went on to say. "Let us pledge ourselves anew to work untiringly to improve and perfect the instruments of international cooperation. We are at the very centre of an historical movement to bring lasting peace, development and security to all humankind."

* * *

The forty-eighth annual NGO Conference organized by the Department of Public Information (DPI) will take place at Headquarters from 18 to 20 September. The Conference is held in cooperation with the Executive Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations associated with the DPI.

The theme of the 1995 DPI/NGO Conference is, "The United Nations at the turn of the century: global issues; global actors; global responsibility." Participants will highlight successful strategies for applying international agreements at the regional, national and local levels, focusing on the integration of younger generations in the process.

* *** *